

What is Claimed:

1. A system for supporting the enforcement of a license for a computer program, the system comprising:

a licensing component that maintains a license store in which the license is stored, the license comprising a right in the software and a set of data associated with said right, the licensing component exposing a callable interface to the computer program, said callable interface comprising:

a right-consumption method which receives an identifier of said right from the computer program and determines whether the right can be exercised; and

an information-retrieval method which receives an identifier of said right from the computer program and provides said set of data, or information based on said set of data, to the computer program.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein said licensing component is usable by a plurality of computer programs, the computer program being included among said plurality of computer programs, wherein said callable interface further comprises:

a handle-opening method that provides a handle to the computer program; wherein the rights-consumption method receives the handle from the computer program and uses the handle to identify the computer program from which a call to the rights-consumption method is received.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the license is one of a plurality of licenses that are stored in said license store, and wherein the rights-consumption method causes the licensing component to select the license based on one or more factors comprising:

whether the license store is associated with the computer program; and

a conflict rule that determines which license to select from among a plurality of licenses that are associated with the computer program.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein said callable interface further comprises:

an asynchronous-context-initiator method that establishes a context for asynchronous

processing and provides an identifier of said context to the computer program;
wherein said rights-consumption method receives the identifier of said context from said computer program and processes a right-consumption request asynchronously in response to receipt of the identifier of said context.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the rights-consumption method determines whether the right can be exercised based on whether the right is identified in the license.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the computer program and the licensing component execute on a machine, and wherein the rights-consumption method determines whether the right can be exercised based on whether the license is bound to said machine.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the computer program is associated with a product identifier, and wherein the rights-consumption method determines whether the right can be exercised based on whether the license is bound to said machine or to a class of machines of which said machine is a member.

8. A method of restricting the use of a computer program associated with a license, the license specifying a right in the computer program, the method comprising:

invoking a licensing service by making a first call to a first method of an interface of said licensing service, said first call being parameterized by an identifier associated with said right;

in response to said first call receiving an indication as to whether the right is exercisable; and

engaging in either a first behavior or a second behavior according to the indication.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said first behavior comprises allowing the computer program to execute, and wherein said second behavior comprises discontinuing execution of the computer program.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein said first behavior comprises allowing the computer program to perform a first set of functions, and wherein said second behavior comprises allowing

the computer program to perform a second set of functions that is non-identical to said first set of functions.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein the right is associated with a set of data, wherein the method further comprises:

making a second call to a second method of said interface, said second method being parameterized by an indication of the right; and
in response to said second call, receiving said set of data.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

directing the operation of the computer program based on said set of data.

13. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

making a second call to a second method of said interface; and
in response to said second call, receiving a handle;

wherein said second call is made prior to said first call, and wherein said first call is further parameterized by said handle.

14. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

making a second call to a second method of said interface; and
in response to said second call, receiving an asynchronous context;

wherein said second call is made prior to said first call, wherein said first call is further parameterized by said asynchronous context, and wherein the computer program performs at least one action while the first call is handled asynchronously.

15. The method of claim 8, wherein said first method determines whether the right is exercisable based on one or more factors comprising:

whether the license is bound to a machine or environment on which the computer program is executing;

whether the license or right is bound to a product identifier associated with the

computer program;

whether the license or right has expired; and

whether the right has been consumed a number of times in excess of a right specified in the license.

16. A computer-readable medium having encoded thereon computer-executable instructions to perform a method of enabling the enforcement of a license to a computer program, the method comprising:

receiving a first method call from the computer program, the first method call identifying a right in the computer program;

determining that the right is contained in the license and is exercisable; and

returning to the computer program an indication that the right is exercisable.

17. The computer-readable medium of claim 16, wherein the indication comprises a binding of the right to the license.

18. The computer-readable medium of claim 16, wherein said determining act is based on whether the right is specified in the license.

19. The computer-readable medium of claim 16, wherein said determining act is based on whether the license is bound to a machine on which the computer program is executing.

20. The computer-readable medium of claim 16, wherein said determining act is based on whether the license or right is bound to the computer program.

21. The computer-readable medium of claim 16, wherein said determining act is based on whether the license or right is non-expired.

22. The computer-readable medium of claim 16, wherein said determining act is based on whether the license has been consumed a number of times that exceeds a limit.

23. The computer-readable medium of claim 16, wherein the method further comprises:
receiving a second method call from the computer program; and
in response to the second method call, returning a handle to the computer program
that identifies the computer program;
wherein said first method call is performed subsequent to said second method call, and wherein said
first method call further identifies said handle.

24. The computer-readable medium of claim 16, wherein the method further comprises:
receiving a second method call from the computer program;
in response to the second method call, returning an asynchronous context to the
computer program, wherein the first method call is executed subsequent to the second method call
and identifies said asynchronous context; and
executing the first method call asynchronously while the computer program performs
an action.

25. The computer-readable medium of claim 16, wherein the right is associated with a set of
data, and wherein the method further comprises:
receiving a second method call which indicates the right; and
in response to said second method call, providing the set of data to the computer
program.